

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Martha Hoku

Martha Hoku, daughter of the Rev. Henry K. Poepoe and Lucia Awai Poepoe, was born in Honolulu in 1907. Her family occupied the parsonage of Kaumakapili Church in Pālama.

She attended Ka'iulani School through grade six. Grades seven through twelve were completed at Kamehameha Schools where she boarded and attended classes.

She later completed Normal School but chose not to enter the teaching profession.

She married Clarence Hoku and raised two children.

She played piano for gym and dance classes at Pālama Settlement. Her daughter, Leila, attended classes there.

Hoku, recognized as a leader and expert in the field of Hawaiian music, continues to share her love of music with others in the community.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Martha Hohu (MH)

Honolulu, O'ahu

March 18, 1997

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This an interview with Mrs. Martha Hohu in Liliha, Honolulu, O'ahu, on March 18, 1997, and the interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay, Mrs. Hohu, I think today we're going to start from the very beginning of your life. So first of all, when were you born?

MH: When? January 7, 1907. And at that time, my parents were living at the then—you'll notice I use the phrase "the then"—Vineyard Street. 'Cause my dad was responsible for what they call the boys' field. And the person responsible for my father getting to where he got was Reverend Theodore Richards. A great deal of *aloha* for me. He had a great deal of love for my father, and saw in my father possibilities. You know, those things don't pass me. In fact, I say thank you to them.

MK: And now that you've mentioned your father and your mother, what were their names?

MH: The Reverend and Mrs. Henry K. Poepoe, P-O-E-P-O-E. And he later became the pastor of Kaumakapili Church. When I see pastors today getting vacations, I never, ever heard of my father going on a vacation. Never. I suppose they don't know how to vacation from the work of the Lord. You know, that's something to think about.

MK: And then your mother, what was her maiden name?

MH: My mother was a real home person. Always had my father's clothes ready for him, so that when he came home after a meeting—it just happened we lived right back of the church, just a block back—change, put on entire new set. My mother was always ready. And in those days, we didn't own a washing machine. Use the old board, but everything was done right. She even ironed on the floor. I don't know that I would like that condition today. I would do it if I have to. But if she was able to do it, then so can I.

MK: You know, your father, the Reverend Poepoe, tell me about his background.

MH: He came originally from Maui. I don't know too much, in fact, I don't know anything about his early days. But it seems that somebody heard, one person heard him talking, and just said to him, "You're going to go to bible school." And that's how Dad got the beginning.

Memory is something I cannot describe for him. He did everything from memory. Of course he knew how to write, but he wasn't going to write [down] his sermon. But I remember him getting up about three o'clock in the morning. That's when he worked. You never saw him during the day get his book out. It was that time of the day or the night. And of course my mother being the person that she—she never bothered him. Never!

Dad, beside being the preacher, was also the buyer. See, in those days, we didn't have the markets like we have today. He would go, purchase everything, bring home, that was it. We were always, always supplied with food. Always. And of course, it was just I, my sister, and a brother. The rest of the family had gone. But then later on, when my sister and I went to Kamehameha [Schools], there was nobody home.

MK: Originally, how many children did your mom and dad have?

MH: Eleven. My oldest brother, Andrew, was a singer. He went to the Mainland and just stayed there, married a girl from Oklahoma and founded his home in New York where he could sing. Came back maybe once or twice but not to stay, it was just to visit. I don't blame him. That was where he could do what he wanted. No, not what he wanted, what he could, at that time, when I think back. There was nothing here for any musicians then.

MK: How about your other brothers and sisters? What did they . . .

MH: My brother Sam wasn't too much of a show person. I had a brother John who was adopted by my mother's sister because they didn't have any children. So they adopted John and my sister Mary. They just lived next door. (Chuckles) But I remember those days, because we would run between the two houses and then go together to the boys' play field. It was that kind of living. Wonderful. We didn't know what it is to fight. Now I think about it often when I read what's happening today—maybe because we didn't have too many things, so you make do with what you have. And because we didn't have stores where I can go and buy what I like, no way. And money was not that easy, so you didn't get money. And therefore, I never heard of any problems like today. Not that I didn't hear it, but then I think I was old enough to understand many things. But I just don't hear it. Either that, or we just lived in a place where that didn't happen. I don't know.

MK: You know, you mentioned that there were eleven children.

MH: Yes.

MK: In your family. What number are you?

MH: Nine. And my sister Dorothy is ten, and my brother Daniel is eleven. Now, when Daniel was born, we had come to live in Pālama from Vineyard Street. We had to wait a year for him to have a name. Theodore Richards said, "You wait. I'll give you a name." And he gave Daniel his name.

MK: So you said that you were born in the Vineyard area, right?

MH: Yeah, Vineyard Street area.

MK: And then later on your family moved to Pālama.

MH: Because Papa became the minister. So we did everything—going to school, church, the streetcar at that time—everything was right there. No need car.

MK: When your father became the minister of Kaumakapili Church, where did you folks live, exactly?

MH: Just a block behind. You know where is the church? There was a gate at each corner, and we had the gate that led to Kanoa Street and Banyan Street. And we were at the corner of Banyan and Kanoa, so we just walked into the gate, church. All of us either go through the churchyard to get to school, Ka'iulani School, or walk it. So there's no excuse. No need ride car, just walk. Well, I suppose it was meant to be. Everything. Even like going to Pālama [Settlement], just walk. No need ride. Just walk up. Then if you feel like coming home, you could come home, just a block. I remember that, how many times up and down, up and down. Good fun, though. Other families all walk up the street. (Laughs) When I went to Kamehameha [Schools], that stopped. It was only during summer that you could get a taste of what Pālama had to offer.

But in those days, the reason for Pālama Settlement was the [Strong-Carter] Dental Clinic we had that was very [inexpensive]. Twenty-five cents. Yeah. See, it was made possible [by] Mr. [James A.] Rath. The Rath family were responsible. So you just go get your teeth [taken care of], pay whatever. You know, you think back about those people who did things out of the goodness of their heart. Today, "You gotta pay me first." Well, that's today. And that, to me, when I read of all the problems we are having, it's we who are making the problems. Nobody else. Don't blame anybody.

MK: You know, you'd mentioned that when you folks were small, your brothers and sisters and yourself, you folks didn't fight that much with each other. What did you folks do?

MH: Well, when we moved up to where the parsonage is, there, the yard was big. There were three or four *kiawe* trees that we had to clean, pick up all the beans. (Laughs) Oh, I'll never forget that. But we had a buyer. Mr. Mahoe had these two horses to get to church, because there was no bus, from here. And so we pick up the beans in the bags. When he comes down, put 'em in the car and get twenty-five cents a bag. You know, there was no need for money, because we didn't have the kind of stores we have now. I think the reason is that we were properly fed at home, so there was no need to go to the store.

MK: You know, also, you were mentioning that there weren't the kinds of stores that we have today. But in that Pālama area, were there any stores back then?

MH: There was just this one store, Tamashiro Market. Just that one store. No, there was one at the corner of Kanoa and that street, and then one on the corner there. That's it.

MK: And what kinds of things did they sell?

MH: Most like today's things. But because money was not easily available to us . . .

MK: You didn't go.

MH: What are we going to buy with? And not only that, it was a no-no, and you learned that from home. You didn't go to the store. Because you didn't have the money to buy. I think about it, and there was no, "Oh, I gotta go to the store to buy this. I like this." There was nothing like that. Either we were too busy with what we had to do at home, or my mother and father just never went to the store, unless it was. . . . And only Papa went. He did all the purchasing, not my mother. She never stepped out of the house. It was my father. She would just tell him what [she needed], and that was it. But we never---we don't know what it is to go to the store.

MK: And, you know, you mentioned that you folks used to gather the *kiawe* beans for Mr. Mahoe, and you had things to do. Now what other things did you have to do?

MH: Clean the yard, mow the lawn. (Chuckles) We also had a big plum tree, trouble-maker. Well, the kids come in and [want to] climb that tree. 'Cause if they fell down. . . . So we saw to it that no one climbed the tree. We said to them, "If you want, you pick up the plums on the [ground]." And because of that understanding, we didn't have problems. Like you have today, kids, you tell them no, they gonna go against you, and then, what? Problems. Not in those days. Oh, we must have been brought up properly. I mean, you must draw some kind of conclusion, the parents. . . . And there were all kinds—Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, it was a mixed village. But we got along fine, no problem.

MK: You know, you say when there were Japanese, Koreans, Hawaiians, a mixed village . . .

MH: Yeah.

MK: When were the times when you folks would get in contact with each other?

MH: Go to school together, we just walk. And Ka'iulani School just across the street. Just walk to school and come home. And then those of us who went to Pālama [Settlement], we'd meet other children that lived in other areas. So I remember that, just no problem.

MK: And I know the children would see each other at school. How about the parents? Would they kind of mingle with each other?

MH: I can speak for my folks, no. Mama was---how do you describe her? Not a [going] out person. It took her a long time—well, naturally—before she finally went to church. I know, [she] stay home, take care of the kids. That's what it is. Stay at home, take care of, first, my father. He always came home, everything was ready. And then us. And because of that kind of care, she didn't have any problems. I can go back and [recall] no problems. Of course the years that my sister Dorothy and I went to board at Kamehameha—we had no choice.

MK: And then your father, he's a minister. Did he mingle with people of different ethnic backgrounds?

MH: If and when they came to the house. Like he did all of his weddings right in our living room. Was kind of nice. How do I say it? Warm feeling. I mean, I had no business with it, except to keep the living room ready and to see that at the dining room table, the [marriage] papers [were ready]. Things like that. But other than that, I don't remember having a church wedding when I was growing up. It was everything in the house.

And my dad—this was the one thing I remember—whenever company came to the house, he would change his clothes. Never catch him going like this, put on proper clothes. He would get himself properly attired. (Chuckles) I don't know what you call that. But see, he then built a kind of a thing that we picked up. At all times, be properly attired. It doesn't have to be something new or something, but just be properly attired. I remember that. And my mother never, never would be there if people came to the house. She was always in the back. She never sat in to talk with them, 'cause they came to see my father, not her.

MK: You know, now that we've talked a little bit about your mother, what was your mom's name?

MH: Her name was Lucia, L-U-C-I-A, A'oe. Awai is the family name. And the rest of her family lived down at Waialua. But because Papa had the education he had, then it was to Mama's advantage. She just, shall I say, grew up with it. Yeah, I suppose you grow with it. And because she was the woman that she was, it's gotta be always in the background, always. And I think about it very often. I don't ever remember seeing her mingling. Never. Well, for one thing, I don't blame her. There was all of us to take care [of]. Therefore, stay home. That's the way I look at it. Stay home, bring [up] your family. And I suppose we are the way we are because they brought us up properly. How else am I gonna explain?

MK: I know that later on in your life, you became the organist at the church. How about your mom? Did she do anything like that?

MH: Playing? No. My father played the ukulele beautifully. But my mother, mm mmm [no]. Always the silent listener. Always. But my father would play the ukulele and he can sing, ooh, and he played it beautifully. He played it beautifully. But that's the only instrument he played. And he could read [music]. When [MH's daughter] Leila was able, because she had her early training in piano from the Academy of [the] Sacred Hearts. She started when she was five years old. She didn't want to [got to Kamehameha]. I said, "But babe, if you don't go now, you'll lose your place at Kamehameha," so she left. But by that time, she had the [foundation]. Her background was there. Well, it's something that was there for all of us, 'cause my sisters and their children also went to the academy. From there, Kamehameha. Same background, everybody played the piano. And everybody sang. So, you know, it was there.

MK: And for yourself and your brothers and sisters, how did you folks get your musical training?

MH: For my sister and myself, from home. Teacher would come in on Saturday morning, teach us. Then with that background, we got into Kamehameha, and that was it. The teachers were there and we just went. And both of us played the piano whenever there was a request. The only thing I couldn't do, which she did, was to play dance music. I didn't know how. I just didn't have it. But she did. And then Milton Beamer's father, the two of them, they played beautifully. The kind you sit down and you listen. She had a beautiful way of playing. I just played. A lot of it was because I had a piano at home, and because I sang alto, it was where they put me on the choir. Right here, and there was the organ and the organist. So I saw him pull out whatever was necessary, I thought, oh, I can play that, too. So when the time came, I was able to play just by observing him. And the organist then happened to be the vice-principal for the Kamehameha School for Boys. And the connection there is that our church was the church that students used to come walk—we used to walk down to church in the evening, walk home. So many, many ties. Many ties. Oh, gee.

MK: You know, before you started at Kamehameha, you went to Ka'iulani.

MH: Yeah, Ka'iulani School, grades one through six.

MK: What are your remembrances of Ka'iulani School?

MH: My first grade teacher, Miss Ayau, perfect. I give her the credit for the background. There was no question. Grades one through six, and then from there to Kamehameha, no problem. And with a background at the church, because I had—when I went to church, I played the organ. (Laughs)

MK: And then at school—earlier you had mentioned—there were kids from Korean families, Chinese families . . .

MH: Yeah, 'cause . . .

MK: . . . Hawaiian, Japanese.

MH: They all live there. In fact, right across the street from us was this Chinese family. And my sister married one of the sons. Right across the street. I mean, that's the kind of neighborhood we had. And because everybody was on the same level moneywise and things like that, there was nobody to show off, 'cause we were all the same. Yeah, I remember that. I suppose because we were brought up the way we were, we weren't any better. All the same. I keep thinking about it. We had no reason to be better than. . . . All the same. We didn't have this, they didn't either. See, today, I see the miseries. Too many things are made easily available to the children. And the parents don't know how to say, "No." I can talk, 'cause when my great-grandson comes home and [asks for] something, I say, "Uh uh" [no].

"But . . ."

I say, "You don't 'but' me. You hear what I said? That's it." Then he realizes that I'm right. But see, right away, don't give in. But if something happens where we can sit down, we talk.

MK: You know, back in those days in Pālama, Pālama was known as like a very poor neighborhood.

MH: That's right, that's right. I forget, to become a member [of Pālama Settlement], one dollar [for] one year. Big money, one dollar. (Laughs) You know, if you're a boy, you could play whatever the boys' teams are. If you're a girl, whatever the girl thing—one dollar, one year. But because of that, we were able to get many children in, because the neighborhood is a poor neighborhood. I remember the Rath family, beautiful people, so nice. That's why they were able to build it, because they understood the need for. Oh yeah, gosh. (Laughs)

MK: You know, when you were a child, did you go to Pālama Settlement?

MH: No. By the time we got there, I was already in school at there. No, we weren't allowed to. No more time. Come home, you clean the yard. You know, things around the house. We never even went to the store to buy candy. We didn't have the money.

MK: And then when you were small, though, did the other children in the neighborhood talk about Pālama Settlement with you?

MH: No, not really, not really. As I think back, the families were not the [going] out kind. Today you see the kids all over the place.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: Oh, you were talking about the families at old Pālama.

MH: Yeah. I don't know what it is, but we would just walk up, and everybody would come from the areas, and many of us were church members, the parents were members. So you get that kind of family thing going. All the children go to same school, [then to] Pālama. Oh, that was so long ago. See, that's what brings families together. Never mind the status, just go.

I suppose because we didn't have many things that the average family today can get just by. . . . We didn't have. So you make do with what you have. And we—my sister and I and my brother—we were not the asking kind. I suppose we didn't know how to ask. I really don't know what happened. Either that, or I really credit my first grade teacher and then all those after that into the sixth grade. The same kind of background. You just knew it. Then I went Kamehameha after that, but that was my background. I give those teachers [credit]. That's why when I look at the teachers today, I say, "Mm mm. No way. No way. That's your fault." Therefore, I say to [myself]—"What did our teachers then have which I don't have today?" I don't know. A dedication. They worked with nothing. Today, they asking [for] money for [their] classroom. Those days, you make things for your room. I don't know. I'm not a teacher, so-called, but I sit here and I think. And of course because Kalani goes to Ma'ema'e School, he becomes that person I can talk to.

MK: And then in your case, you went to Kamehameha.

MH: Yeah, right after sixth grade at Ka'iulani School, that was it.

MK: And when you went to Kamehameha in those days, was it commuting to school? Or . . .

MH: I was a boarder, few years. Oh, I'm glad because many things I would not have gotten at home as I look back now. I'm not blaming Mother and Father. That was the way it was. But because of what we had in school. But I also had sisters who followed, because they went to Kamehameha, too. But because they knew what to do, there was no question.

MK: And what do you remember about your days at Kamehameha?

MH: One of the things that began when I was there was [learning to care for] babies. See, they built a cottage for a director and six students and babies, so that makes a family. So the first week, I'm the mama of the baby, I no go school. But of course, I get my lessons, I take care of the baby, gotta feed 'em, gotta take 'em to the doctor. (Laughs) So each one of us had a chance at the baby. Then after our six weeks were over, then the next group came in.

I remember also not only take care of the baby, cook a dinner and have people in to dinner.

So you learn how to cook whatever, set table. And I remember once with Kalani, [he asked] something about the silver. And my thoughts went back to how we had to set table, very specific. So I've always thought if I had to go to work in a restaurant, I would know, I know how to set the table, I know how to wash dishes, I know the first things that had to be washed first, and then down finally to the plates. I thought I can do that if I didn't have anything to do and had to depend on that, I can. And I would never be ashamed. The only thing I would ask to do is wash pots and pans. They'd thought I'd be crazy. I suppose I am. Wash pots and pans. Because when my husband was in the business of *kālua* pig stuff, I was the dishwasher, yeah? I made sure that the pots and pans were ready for him.

MK: So when you went to Kamehameha, there was a lot of emphasis on practical education.

MH: Oh, yes.

MK: Preparing you.

MH: Yes.

MK: Preparing you for all the home ec[onomics] things that you would have to take care of.

MH: That's right.

MK: How about the boys? What were they concentrating on?

MH: Let's see. Boys' school. Well, I'm afraid I couldn't say too much for them. They had---where Kapālama has that school on School Street, you know, they have that building, that was the boys' place for milk the cows. That was their place. So they would milk the cows and bring us the milk. Across the street, there was this pasture. So you get the cows there, then you bring 'em back. That was their job.

MK: Were they getting some sort of vocational training, too, in the trades?

MH: Yeah, they had. . . . Not only that, they had electricity. What else? Oh, and at that time, the horse shed. They had that. They had a kitchen. They had to learn how to cook, set table. That was there. Only the boys. And then of course it was us. And that's why in setting the table one day, I said to Kalani, "Kalani, we had a table that sat thirty-two people around. And you set that table for thirty-two."

He said, "Mm hmm." So the silver gotta be just so. Spoons, forks, whatever, and the soup spoon, the glass. And we used to call her *tūtū*. What was---the chief person for the kitchen. She sat at what I call that end of the table. And the principal sat across her, there. And she served the tea things, so you can have tea, whatever. She would serve, and everything had to be set just so. Oh, I remember. That's why sometimes I'm a little bit fussy [about the table setting] 'cause the thing comes to my mind. And when you wash, certain things first. And when you wipe, certain things first. He said, "Grandma."

I said, "No, just do as I do. Watch. There will come a day when I'm not gonna be around. Neither your mother or anyone else. Your sisters. But what I do, do likewise." 'Cause that's how we learned, by observation. 'Cause by us, we had to set the table. Silver, the spoons, the

forks, the glasses.

MK: How about your studies?

MH: Well, we had study hour in what was called the study hall, all the students. Eight o'clock was break time, gave us ten minutes for break, then back to study till nine o'clock. I don't know, I would live it again. What it taught was timing. You have ten minutes, you have five minutes, and you learn within that time to do what you're supposed to. I mean, to this day.

MK: In the beginning, how did you adjust to that, as compared to how you were at home?

MH: I suppose there was—you just did what you were told to do. 'Cause you're now in this school, and the teachers now tell you what to do. And so you just do. I suppose it depends on how you were brought up. Part of it is my sisters, who had been to Kamehameha. So they knew. So I went into it with no qualms. They went through it. So just follow and don't grumble, because if you grumble, you gonna get it.

MK: And then in those days, what kind of academic subjects did they have?

MH: Like today. Math, English. Ooh, our English teacher. When I hear speakers today [say], "You know," Those two words we never use. 'Cause almost every sentence, "You know." I want to tell them, "No, I don't know, therefore you tell me." Ooh, our English teacher. So we just never used the words "you know."

MK: And then in social studies, what did they emphasize?

MH: Same just like today. Same things. To me, I suppose . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: Okay, we were just talking about social studies at Kamehameha.

MH: I suppose we just took in what was given to us. You never heard a student say, "But I don't want to do that." (Laughs) Today, parents are too permissive. "You can do what you like." Therefore, what I say is if something happens, that's partly your fault to be too permissive.

MK: So back in your time at Kamehameha, they were very strict.

MH: You never dared do anything. Well, of course, if I'm speaking for myself, I had no choice. In the way I was brought up, there was no choice.

MK: You know, nowadays at Kamehameha, they do a lot of Hawaiian studies. At your time?

MH: No way. Ooh, ooh, no way. It just happens that because I was brought up—because Mama and Papa spoke Hawaiian, I had it. But for those who didn't, who came [after Hawaiian language

was banned], would have been difficult. But that was a no-no.

MK: How about Hawaiian dance, like the hula? Hawaiian singing?

MH: No, no.

MK: No, way back then at Kamehameha?

MH: That's right. That was a no-no. Well, I suppose you have to think back. Those were days when what you and I considered today as part of our culture, no it was not.

MK: What do you think of that?

MH: Well, for then, I don't blame them. That was the way it was for them. The children then, the broad training, just throw it at them, then they gonna know what to do. So that when they go out, they know what to do. Because if you hide it from them now, ey, when they get out, they going get into trouble, it's your fault. Just tell them.

MK: And then back in your days, you graduated from Kamehameha in 1925.

MH: Right.

MK: Then you went to [Territorial] Normal [and Training] School for two years.

MH: Right, and then . . .

MK: And then to the University of Hawai'i.

MH: Two years.

MK: And because you went to Normal School, you had teacher's training, but you didn't go into teaching.

MH: I did not want to, but I had no choice. That was the way it went. I'm glad I did, though. I'm glad I did, because I understand. I did teach within the unit, because it was six weeks fifth grade, six weeks sixth grade. And the worst part of it, the sixth grade teacher suffered from asthma. So when I happened to have it the same time that I was supposed to work with her, she understood. So I didn't teach. My partner did. Didn't do a good job. It just wasn't her thing. But what I did, because I didn't teach, I would see to the necessary things, like getting that thing to drink for the children that needed. . . .

MK: Oh the cod-liver oil.

MH: Little things and any other little things that needed to be done, I would do it so that she would just spend her time teaching.

MK: Why is it that you didn't want to continue in teaching?

MH: That wasn't my thing. I did not want to teach. And in the meantime, I have to. . . . The other

day, Reverend [William] Kaina called me and he asked me to write the story of my life. I said, "What are you going to do with it?"

He said, "I just want to know." So I did. But I forgot—and I must call him for it—but I forgot that in the latter part of my life, I was twenty-five years at the Bishop Museum . . .

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

MH: Where am I?

MK: The latter part of your life, you were at Bishop Museum.

MH: Yeah, I forgot to write on that paper that for twenty-five years, I [worked at] Bishop Museum front desk. I forgot about it. Completely forgot. Also, during that twenty-five years, as a part of that twenty-five years, I was accompanyist for the Bernice Adelle Ross' vocal class. It was while I was with her as the accompanyist that I got the job at the Bishop Museum, 'cause Dr. [Peter] Buck. So once she said, "You're going to the Bishop Museum," I said, "What about you?"

She said, "What about me?"

I said, "No, not after almost twenty-five years with you. I cannot."

She said, "You're going."

I said, "Did you tell Dr. Buck that I know nothing about the museum?" That is, the exhibition part.

"He will teach you."

I said, "But Mrs. Ross, he doesn't have that kind of time."

"He will teach you." That's the message I got. So you shut up after that and you go, which I did.

And I said to her, "And you?"

"You will just come on Saturdays."

MK: That was nice of you to be so loyal to her to be worried about her.

MH: Ey, you don't just leave people just because, no way. But she evidently had it all worked out with Sir Peter Buck that they wrote to me like this. And the worst part of it, my husband and I took care of Dr. Buck's yard. Beautiful yard. Mow the lawn, water the plants.

MK: Now that you've mentioned your husband, you got married in 1927.

MH: [Nineteen twenty-]seven, '28, something like that.

MK: To Mr. Clarence Hohu.

MH: Clarence, that's right.

MK: And after you folks are married, you had two children, and one of them was Leila.

MH: That's right, that's right.

MK: And it's after Leila was born that you started going to Pālama Settlement?

MH: Yeah, yeah, because then we'd go down to Mama's, I'd leave her there and walk up to. . . . Oh, gosh.

MK: And when you walked up to Pālama Settlement, what did you do there?

MH: Play the piano. I did a bit of piano teaching, not too much, being that the children first didn't have the wherewithal and no instrument at home. It would be stupid to expect too much. But share, share. You never know. Maybe out of that would come a student that could afford to go and get a piano.

MK: And then when you went there to play music for the dance classes . . .

MH: Yeah, whatever the teacher wanted.

MK: So what kind of music did you play?

MH: I can't remember now. I mean, I can't remember in detail. Maybe Leila would remember. It was whatever she taught, and if she brought the music. If not, we'd just find the music and play. 'Cause Leila did join that—there was this very select group. Well, 'cause the kids went Kamehameha, summertime. So they had background. And they just had it. No problem, there were five or six girls. It was perfect, perfect. And I was the piano player, right? And I suppose I did it more because I just belonged to the community, and I was just brought up that way.

MK: And then how were the children, you know, when you were teaching some of them piano? How did they receive you?

MH: I suppose I never thought of it. I just never thought of it. Most likely, because of their status, so accept. But make them understand, same, no different, I think they will love you for that. But if you put on airs, you're lost. And especially—well, not only in Pālama, any other area where you find people like that, you're lost to them.

MK: You know, when you look back on Pālama Settlement, what do you think was their biggest role, their biggest job in Pālama? Or their biggest accomplishment in Pālama?

MH: To help the people in the community. Never mind the status. 'Cause the original Pālama [Settlement] was down Liliha and King. That was the original. Then they moved from there to where it is now. Never mind who you are, just get in there. To me, that's the thing. There was no, "I'm better than you." There's just not that feeling. I could have done it. But the thing is, when you go there, and you see what you see, your heart goes out. What you have to do, the

child needs help. Give it. Yeah, that's how I feel about it. I don't know. In fact, that's how all of us, even the men. When I think of the men today that became who they were, same thing. Give the kids a chance. Never mind, just do it. Pay or no pay, just teach 'em. But that was yesterday. I don't know, today, you gotta pay me, sign the contract. Not then, not then.

MK: So back in those days, people helped in Pālama, worked with the kids.

MH: Yeah.

MK: I think we'll end the interview here then.

MH: Okay.

MK: Is that okay?

MH: Yeah.

MK: Okay, I'm going to end it here.

END OF INTERVIEW

Reflections of Pālama Settlement

Volume I

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